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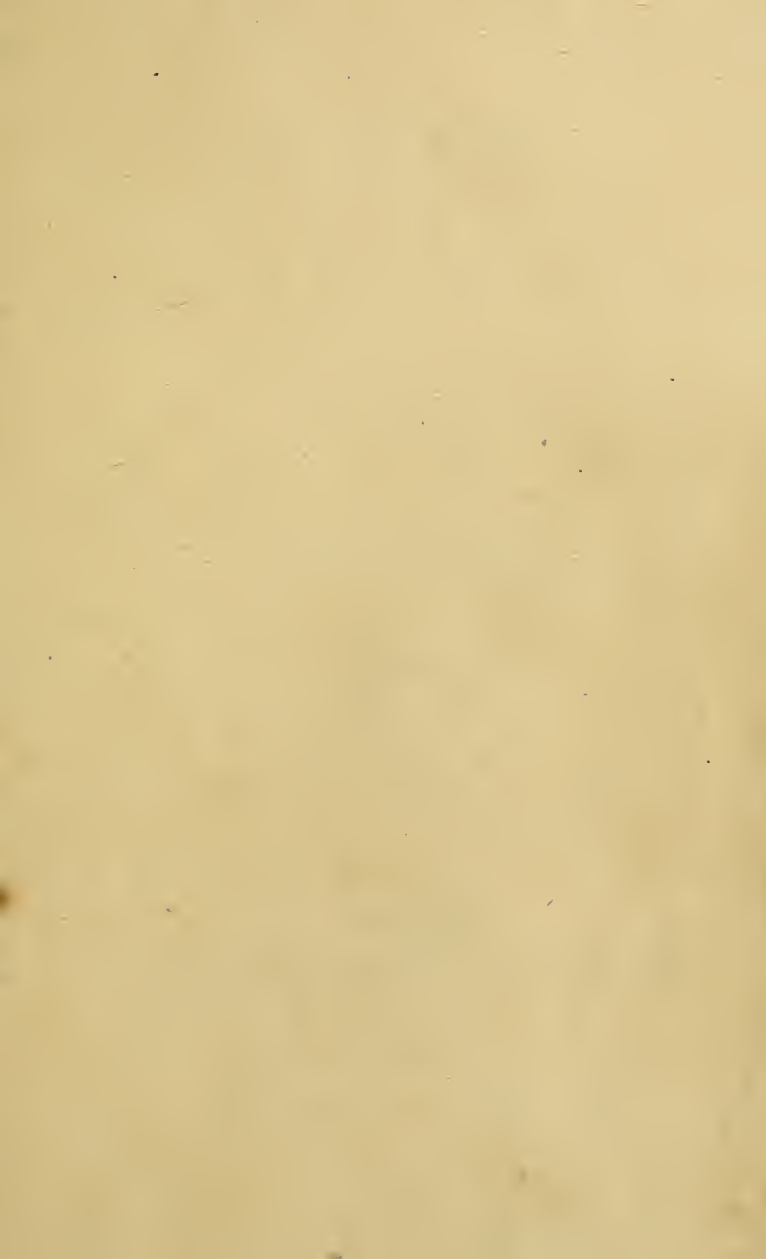
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THE

Prisoner of Chillon,

AND

OTHER POEMS:

BY LORD BYRON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1816.

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE

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SONNET ON CHILLON.

ETERNAL spirit of the chainless mind !

Brightest in dungeons, Liberty ! thou art,

For there thy habitation is the heart—

The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;

And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—

To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,

Their country conquers with their martyrdom,

And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.

Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar—for 'twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard!¹—May none those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

THE
PRISONER OF CHILLON.

A FABLE.

I.

My hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,²
As men's have grown from sudden fears :
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare ; 10
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death ;

That father perish'd at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake ;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place ;
We were seven—who now are one,
Six in youth, and one in age,
Finish'd as they had begun,
Proud of Persecution's rage ; 20
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have seal'd ;
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied ;
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II.

There are seven pillars of gothic mold,
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and grey,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray, 30
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left ;

Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp :
And in each pillar there is a ring,
And in each ring there is a chain ;
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away, 40
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score,
When my last brother droop'd and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III.

They chain'd us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone,
We could not move a single pace, 50
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight ;

And thus together—yet apart,
Fettered in hand, but pined in heart ;
'Twas still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each,
With some new hope, or legend old, 60
Or song heroically bold ;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon-stone,
 A grating sound—not full and free
 As they of yore were wont to be :
 It might be fancy—but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV.

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest 70
I ought to do—and did my best—
And each did well in his degree.

The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him—with eyes as blue as heaven,
For him my soul was sorely moved ;
And truly might it be distressed
To see such bird in such a nest ;
For he was beautiful as day—
(When day was beautiful to me 80
As to young eagles, being free)—
A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun :
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for nought but others' ills,
And then they flowed like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe 90
Which he abhorr'd to view below.

V.

The other was as pure of mind,
But formed to combat with his kind ;

Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perish'd in the foremost rank

With joy :—but not in chains to pine :
His spirit withered with their clank,
I saw it silently decline—

And so perchance in sooth did mine ; 100
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,
Had followed there the deer and wolf ;
To him this dungeon was a gulf,
And fettered feet the worst of ills.

VI.

Lake Lemman lies by Chillon's walls :
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow ;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent 110
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,³

Which round about the wave enthralls :
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave.

Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
We heard it ripple night and day ;
 Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd ;
And I have felt the winter's spray 119
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky ;
 And then the very rock hath rock'd,
 And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII.

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loath'd and put away his food ;
It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare, 130
And for the like had little care :
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captive's tears
Have moisten'd many a thousand years,

Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den :
But what were these to us or him ?
These wasted not his heart or limb ;
My brother's soul was of that mould 140
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side ;
But why delay the truth ?—he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died—and they unlocked his chain,
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave 150
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begg'd them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.

I might have spared my idle prayer—
They coldly laugh'd—and laid him there :
The flat and turfless earth above 160
The being we so much did love ;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such murder's fitting monument !

VIII.

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherish'd since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be 170
Less wretched now, and one day free ;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired—
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh God ! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing

In any shape, in any mood :—
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean 180
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread :
But these were horrors—this was woe
Unmix'd with such—but sure and slow :
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender—kind,
And grieved for those he left behind ;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom 190
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray—
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright,
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o'er his untimely lot,—
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,





Drawn by Rich^d Westall R.A.

Engraved by Cha^s Heath.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON.

I LISTENED FOR I COULD NOT HEAR —

I CALLED FOR I WAS WILD WITH FEAR;

Stan. 5 Line 208

PUBLISHED BY JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, DEC. 1. 1819.

For I was sunk in silence—lost 200
In this last loss, of all the most ;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less :
I listened, but I could not hear—
I called, for I was wild with fear ;
I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonished ;
I called, and thought I heard a sound—
I burst my chain with one strong bound, 210
And rush'd to him :—I found him not,
I only stirr'd in this black spot,
I only lived—*I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew ;
The last—the sole—the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath—
My brothers—both had ceased to breathe : 220
I took that hand which lay so still,
Alas ! my own was full as chill ;

I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive—
A frantic feeling, when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.

I know not why,
I could not die,
I had no earthly hope—but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death. 230

IX.

What next befell me then and there
I know not well—I never knew—
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too :
I had no thought, no feeling—none—
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist ;
For all was blank, and bleak, and grey,
It was not night—it was not day, 240
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,

But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness—without a place ;
There were no stars—no earth—no time—
No check—no change—no good—no crime—
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death ;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless ! 250

X.

A light broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird ;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery ;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track, 260
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before,

I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,
And tamer than upon the tree ;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seem'd to say them all for me ! 270

I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more :
It seem'd like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine, 280
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird ! I could not wish for thine !
Or if it were, in winged guise,
A visitant from Paradise ;

For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile;
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 'twas mortal—well I knew, 290
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,—
Lone—as the corse within its shroud,
Lone—as a solitary cloud,
 A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
 When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI.

A kind of change came in my fate, 300
My keepers grew compassionate,
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was:—my broken chain:
With links unfasten'd did remain,

And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part ;
And round the pillars one by one, 310
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod ;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick.

XII.

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all, 320
Who loved me in a human shape ;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me :
No child—no sire—no kin had I,
No partner in my misery ;

I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad ;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high, 330
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII.

I saw them—and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame ;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow ;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channell'd rock and broken bush ;
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down ; 340
And then there was a little isle,⁴
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view ;
A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,

But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.

350

The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all ;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly,
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain ;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load ;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest.

360

XIV.

It might be months, or years, or days,

I kept no count—I took no note,

I had no hope my eyes to raise;

And clear them of their dreary mote ;

At last men came to set me free, 370

I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where,

It was at length the same to me,

Fettered or fetterless to be,

I learn'd to love despair.

And thus when they appear'd at last,

And all my bonds aside were cast,

These heavy walls to me had grown

A hermitage—and all my own !

And half I felt as they were come

To tear me from a second home: 380

With spiders I had friendship made,

And watch'd them in their sullen trade,

Had seen the mice by moonlight play,

And why should I feel less than they ?

We were all inmates of one place,

And I, the monarch of each race,

Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell !
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell—
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends 390
To make us what we are:—even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

SONNET.

ROUSSEAU—Voltaire—our Gibbon—and de Staël—

⁵ Lemman! these names are worthy of thy shore,

Thy shore of names like these, wert thou no more,
Their memory thy remembrance would recall :

To them thy banks were lovely as to all,

But they have made them lovelier, for the lore
Of mighty minds doth hallow in the core
Of human hearts the ruin of a wall

Where dwelt the wise and wondrous; but by *thee*
How much more, Lake of Beauty! do we feel,

In sweetly gliding o'er thy crystal sea,
The wild glow of that not ungentle zeal,

Which of the heirs of immortality
Is proud, and makes the breath of glory real!

STANZAS TO —.

I.

THOUGH the day of my destiny's over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrunk not to share it with me,
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in *thee*.

II.

Then when nature around me is smiling
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling
Because it reminds me of thine;

And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If their billows excite an emotion
It is that they bear me from *thee*.

III.

Though the rock of my last hope is shiver'd,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is deliver'd
To pain—it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me :
They may crush, but they shall not condemn—
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them.

IV.

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slander'd, thou never could'st shake,—
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,

Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,
Nor, mute, that the world might belie.

V.

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one—
If my soul was not fitted to prize it
'Twas folly not sooner to shun :
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *thee*.

VI.

From the wreck of the past, which hath perish'd,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that what I most cherish'd
Deserved to be dearest of all :
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of *thee*.

DARKNESS.

I HAD a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air ;
Morn came, and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation ; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light :
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons ; cities were consumed,

And men were gathered round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face ;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch :
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd ;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them ; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept ; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled ;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and looked up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world ; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd : the wild birds
 shriek'd,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings ; the wildest brutes

Came tame and tremulous ; and vipers crawl'd
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food :
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again ;—a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom : no love was left ;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death,
Immediate and inglorious ; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh ;
The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lured their lank jaws ; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees ; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,

And they were enemies ; they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage ; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery ; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths ;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal ; as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead ; the tides were in their grave,

The moon their mistress had expired before ;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd ; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the universe.

CHURCHILL'S GRAVE,

A FACT LITERALLY RENDERED.

I stood beside the grave of him who blazed
The comet of a season, and I saw
The humblest of all sepulchres, and gazed
With not the less of sorrow and of awe
On that neglected turf and quiet stone,
With name no clearer than the names unknown,
Which lay unread around it; and I ask'd
The Gardener of that ground, why it might be
That for this plant strangers his memory task'd
Through the thick deaths of half a century;
And thus he answered—"Well, I do not know
"Why frequent travellers turn to pilgrims so;

“ He died before my day of Sextonship,
“ And I had not the digging of this grave.”
And is this all? I thought,—and do we rip
The veil of Immortality? and crave
I know not what of honour and of light
Through unborn ages, to endure this blight?
So soon and so successless? As I said,
The Architect of all on which we tread,
For Earth is but a tombstone, did essay
To extricate remembrance from the clay,
Whose minglings might confuse a Newton’s thought
Were it not that all life must end in one,
Of which we are but dreamers;—as he caught
As ’twere the twilight of a former Sun,
Thus spoke he,—“ I believe the man of whom
“ You wot, who lies in this selected tomb,
“ Was a most famous writer in his day,
“ And therefore travellers step from out their way
“ To pay him honour,—and myself whate’er
“ Your honour pleases,”—then most pleased I shook
From out my pocket’s avaricious nook
Some certain coins of silver, which as ’twere
Perforce I gave this man, though I could spare

So much but inconveniently ;—Ye smile,
I see ye, ye profane ones ! all the while,
Because my homely phrase the truth would tell.
You are the fools, not I—for I did dwell
With a deep thought, and with a soften'd eye,
On that Old Sexton's natural homily,
In which there was Obscurity and Fame,
The Glory and the Nothing of a Name.

THE DREAM.

I.

Our life is twofold ; Sleep hath its own world,
A boundary between the things misnamed
Death and existence : Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality,
And dreams in their developement have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy ;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off our waking toils,
They do divide our being ; they become
A portion of ourselves as of our time,
And look like heralds of eternity ;
They pass like spirits of the past,—they speak
Like sybils of the future ; they have power—
The tyranny of pleasure and of pain ;

They make us what we were not—what they will,
And shake us with the vision that's gone by,
The dread of vanish'd shadows—Are they so?
Is not the past all shadow? What are they?
Creations of the mind?—The mind can make
Substance, and people planets of its own 20
With beings brighter than have been, and give
A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.
I would recall a vision which I dream'd
Perchance in sleep—for in itself a thought,
A slumbering thought, is capable of years,
And curdles a long life into one hour.

II.

I saw two beings in the hues of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green and of mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such, 30
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke

Arising from such rustic roofs ;—the hill
Was crown'd with a peculiar diadem
Of trees, in circular array, so fix'd,
Not by the sport of nature, but of man :
These two, a maiden and a youth, were there
Gazing—the one on all that was beneath 40
Fair as herself—but the boy gazed on her ;
And both were young, and one was beautiful :
And both were young—yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge
The maid was on the eve of womanhood ;
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him ; he had look'd
Upon it till it could not pass away ; 50
He had no breath, no being, but in her's ;
She was his voice ; he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words ; she was his sight,
For his eye followed her's, and saw with her's,
Which coloured all his objects :—he had ceased
To live within himself ; she was his life,

The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all: upon a tone,
A touch of her's, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously—his heart 60
Unknowing of its cause of agony.
But she in these fond feelings had no share:
Her sighs were not for him; to her he was
Even as a brother—but no more; 'twas much,
For brotherless she was, save in the name
Her infant friendship had bestowed on him;
Herself the solitary scion left
Of a time-honoured race.—It was a name
Which pleased him, and yet pleased him not—and why?
Time taught him a deep answer—when she loved 70
Another; even *now* she loved another,
And on the summit of that hill she stood
Looking afar if yet her lover's steed
Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew.

III.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
There was an ancient mansion, and before

Its walls there was a steed caparisoned :
Within an antique Oratory stood
The Boy of whom I spake ;—he was alone,
And pale, and pacing to and fro ; anon 80
He sate him down, and seized a pen, and traced
Words which I could not guess of ; then he lean'd
His bow'd head on his hands, and shook as 'twere
With a convulsion—then arose again,
And with his teeth and quivering hands did tear
What he had written, but he shed no tears.
And he did calm himself, and fix his brow
Into a kind of quiet ; as he paused,
The Lady of his love re-entered there,
She was serene and smiling then, and yet 90
She knew she was by him beloved,—she knew,
For quickly comes such knowledge, that his heart
Was darken'd with her shadow, and she saw
That he was wretched, but she saw not all.
He rose, and with a cold and gentle grasp
He took her hand ; a moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, and then it faded, as it came ;

He dropped the hand he held, and with slow steps
Retired, but not as bidding her adieu, 100
For they did part with mutual smiles; he pass'd
From out the massy gate of that old Hall,
And mounting on his steed he went his way;
And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

IV.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream,
The Boy was sprung to manhood: in the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home,
And his Soul drank their sunbeams; he was girt
With strange and dusky aspects; he was not
Himself like what he had been; on the sea 110
And on the shore he was a wanderer;
There was a mass of many images
Crowded like waves upon me, but he was
A part of all; and in the last he lay
Reposing from the noon-tide sultriness,
Couched among fallen columns, in the shade
Of ruin'd walls that had survived the names
Of those who rear'd them; by his sleeping side



Drawn by Rich^d Westall R.A.

Engraved by Chas^r Heath.

THE DREAM.

_____ : AND IN THE LAST HE LAY
 REPOSING FROM THE NOONTIDE SULTRINESS,
 COUCHED AMONG FALLEN COLUMNS, _____

STANZA 4.

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Stood camels grazing, and some goodly steeds
Were fasten'd near a fountain; and a man 120
Clad in a flowing garb did watch the while,
While many of his tribe slumber'd around:
And they were canopied by the blue sky,
So cloudless, clear, and purely beautiful,
That God alone was to be seen in Heaven.

V.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love was wed with One
Who did not love her better;—in her home,
A thousand leagues from his,—her native home,
She dwelt, begirt with growing Infancy, 130
Daughters and sons of Beauty,—but behold!
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.
What could her grief be?—she had all she loved,
And he who had so loved her, was not there
To trouble with bad hopes, or evil wish,

Or ill-repress'd affliction, her pure thoughts.
What could her grief be?—she had loved him not,
Nor given him cause to deem himself beloved, 141
Nor could he be a part of that which prey'd
Upon her mind—a spectre of the past.

VI.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.—
The Wanderer was return'd.—I saw him stand
Before an Altar—with a gentle bride ;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The Starlight of his Boyhood ;—as he stood
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
The selfsame aspect, and the quivering shock 150
That in the antique Oratory shook
His bosom in its solitude ; and then—
As in that hour—a moment o'er his face
The tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced,—and then it faded as it came,
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
And all things reel'd around him ; he could see

Not that which was, nor that which should have been—
But the old mansion, and the accustom'd hall, 160
And the remembered chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
All things pertaining to that place and hour,
And her who was his destiny, came back
And thrust themselves between him and the light:
What business had they there at such a time?

VII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The lady of his love;—Oh! she was changed
As by the sickness of the soul; her mind
Had wandered from its dwelling, and her eyes 170
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things;
And forms impalpable and unperceived
Of others' sight familiar were to her's.
And this the world calls phrenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness, and the glance

Of melancholy is a fearful gift ;
What is it but the telescope of truth ? 180
Which strips the distance of its phantasies,
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real !

VIII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.—
The Wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,
Or were at war with him ; he was a mark
For blight and desolation, compass'd round
With Hatred and Contention ; Pain was mix'd
In all which was served up to him, until 190
Like to the Pontic monarch of old days,⁶
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment ; he lived
Through that which had been death to many men,
And made him friends of mountains : with the stars
And the quick Spirit of the Universe
He held his dialogues ; and they did teach
To him the magic of their mysteries ;

To him the book of Night was opened wide,
And voices from the deep abyss reveal'd 200
A marvel and a secret—Be it so.

IX.

My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality—the one
To end in madness—both in misery.

THE INCANTATION.

(The following Poem was a Chorus in an unfinished Witch Drama,
which was begun some years ago.)

I.

WHEN the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;
When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answered owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

II.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep,
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish ;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone ;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gathered in a cloud ;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

III.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been ;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

IV.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse ;
And a spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare ;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice ;
And to thee shall Night deny
All the quiet of her sky ;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

V.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill ;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring ;
From thy own smile I snatched the snake,
For there it coil'd as in a brake ;
From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm ;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

VI.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy ;
By the perfection of thine art
Which pass'd for human thine own heart ;
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,
I call upon thee ! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell !

VII.

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial ;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny ;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear ;
Lo ! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee ;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd—now wither !

PROMETHEUS.

I.

TITAN! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

II.

Titan ! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill ;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refused thee even the boon to die :
The wretched gift eternity
Was thine—and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack ;
The fate thou didst so well foresee
But would not to appease him tell ;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

III.

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind ;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit :
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force ;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source ;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny ;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence :
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself—an equal to all woes,

And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concentered recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

NOTES

TO THE

PRISONER OF CHILLON, &c.

Note 1, page 2, line 5.

By Bonnivard!—may none those marks efface.

François de Bonnivard, fils de Louis de Bonnivard, originaire de Seyssel & Seigneur de Lunes, naquit en 1496; il fit ses études à Turin: en 1510 Jean Aimé de Bonnivard, son oncle, lui resigna le Prieuré de St. Victor, qui aboutissoit aux murs de Geneve, & qui formait un benefice considerable.

Ce grand homme (Bonnivard mérite ce titre par la force de son âme, la droiture de son cœur, la noblesse de ses intentions, la sagesse de ses conseils, le courage de ses démarches, l'étendue de ses connaissances & la vivacité de son esprit), ce grand homme, qui excitera l'admiration de tous ceux qu'une vertu héroïque peut encore émouvoir, inspirera encore la plus vive reconnaissance dans les cœurs des Genevois qui aiment Geneve. Bonnivard en fut toujours un des plus fermes appuis: pour assurer la liberté de nôtre République, il ne craignit pas de perdre souvent la sienne; il

oublia son repos ; il méprisa ses richesses ; il ne négligea rien pour affermir le bonheur d'une patrie qu'il honora de son choix : dès ce moment il la chérit comme le plus zélé de ses citoyens ; il la servit avec l'intrépidité d'un héros, et il écrivit son Histoire avec la naïveté d'un philosophe & la chaleur d'un patriote.

Il dit dans le commencement de son histoire de Geneve, que, *dès qu'il eut commencé de lire l'histoire des nations, il se sentit entraîné par son goût pour les Républiques, dont il épousa toujours les intérêts* : c'est ce goût pour la liberté qui lui fit sans doute adopter Geneve pour sa patrie.

Bonnivard, encore jeune, s'annonça hautement comme le défenseur de Geneve contre le Duc de Savoye et l'Evêque.

En 1519, Bonnivard devient le martyr de sa patrie : Le Duc de Savoye étant entré dans Geneve avec cinq cent hommes, Bonnivard craint le ressentiment du Duc ; il voulut se retirer à Fribourg pour en éviter les suites ; mais il fut trahi par deux hommes qui l'accompagnoient, & conduit par ordre du Prince à Grolée, où il resta prisonnier pendant deux ans. Bonnivard étoit malheureux dans ses voyages : comme ses malheurs n'avoient point ralenti son zèle pour Geneve, il étoit toujours un ennemi redoutable pour ceux qui la menaçoient, & par conséquent il devoit être exposé à leurs coups. Il fut rencontré en 1530 sur le Jura par des voleurs, qui le dépouillèrent, & qui le mirent encore entre les mains du Duc de Savoye : ce Prince le fit enfermer dans le Château de Chillon, où il resta sans être interrogé jusques en 1536 ;

il fut alors delivré par les Bernois, qui s'emparèrent du Pays de Vaud.

Bonnivard, en sortant de sa captivité, eut le plaisir de trouver Geneve libre & réformée ; la République s'empressa de lui témoigner sa reconnoissance et de le dedommager des maux qu'il avoit soufferts ; elle le reçut Bourgeois de la ville au mois de Juin 1536 ; elle lui donna la maison habitée autrefois par le Vicaire-General, et elle lui assigna une pension de 200 écus d'or tant qu'il séjourneroit à Geneve. Il fut admis dans le Conseil des Deux-Cent en 1537.

Bonnivard n'a pas fini d'être utile : après avoir travaillé à rendre Geneve libre, il réussit à la rendre tolérante. Bonnivard engagea le Conseil à accorder aux Ecclesiastiques & aux paysans un tems suffisant pour examiner les propositions qu'on leur faisoit ; il réussit par sa douceur : on prêche toujours le Christianisme avec succès quand on le prêche avec charité.

Bonnivard fut savant ; ses manuscrits, qui sont dans la Bibliothèque publique, prouvent qu'il avoit bien lu les auteurs classiques latins, & qu'il avoit approfondi la théologie & l'histoire. Ce grand homme aimoit les sciences, et il croyoit qu'elles pouvoient faire la gloire de Geneve ; aussi il ne negligea rien pour les fixer dans cette ville naissante ; en 1551 il donna sa bibliothèque au public ; elle fut le commencement de notre bibliothèque publique ; & ces livres sont en partie les rares & belles editions du quinzieme siecle qu'on voit dans notre collection. Enfin, pendant la même année,

ce bon patriote institua la Republique son héritière, à condition qu'elle employeroit ses biens à entretenir le college dont on projettoit la fondation.

Il paroît que Bonnivard mourut en 1570; mais on ne peut l'assurer, parcequ'il y a une lacune dans le Nécrologe depuis le mois de Juillet 1570 jusques en 1571.

Note 2, page 3, line 3.

In a single night.

Ludovico Sforza, and others.—The same is asserted of Marie Antoinette's, the wife of Louis XVI. though not in quite so short a period. Grief is said to have the same effect: to such, and not to fear, this change in *her's* was to be attributed.

Note 3, page 8, line 18.

From Chillon's snow-white battlement.

The Chateau de Chillon is situated between Clarens and Villeneuve, which last is at one extremity of the Lake of Geneva. On its left are the entrances of the Rhone, and opposite are the Heights of Melleirie and the range of Alps above Boveret and St. Gingo.

Near it, on a hill behind, is a torrent; below it, washing its walls, the lake has been fathomed to the depth of 800 feet (French measure); within it are a range of dungeons, in which the early reformers, and subsequently prisoners of state, were confined. Across one of the vaults is a beam

black with age, on which we were informed that the condemned were formerly executed. In the cells are seven pillars, or, rather, eight, one being half merged in the wall; in some of these are rings for the fetters and the fettered: in the pavement the steps of Bonnivard have left their traces—he was confined here several years.

It is by this castle that Rousseau has fixed the catastrophe of his *Héloise*, in the rescue of one of her children by Julie from the water; the shock of which, and the illness produced by the immersion, is the cause of her death.

The chateau is large, and seen along the lake for a great distance. The walls are white.

Note 4, page 19, line 16.

And then there was a little isle.

Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island; the only one I could perceive, in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees, (I think not above three,) and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view.

When the foregoing poem was composed I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard, or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues. Some account of his life will be found in a note appended to the “Sonnet on Chillon,” with which I have been furnished by the kindness of a citi-

zen of that Republic which is still proud of the memory of a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom.

Note 5, page 23, line 2.

Leman ! these names are worthy of thy shore.

Geneva, Ferney, Coppet, Lausanne.

Note 6, page 44, line 13.

Like to the Pontic monarch of old days.

Mithridates of Pontus.











